
Snapshot of the day:

General, humanitarian:

- Over the past day, the Russian army attacked 8 Ukrainian Oblasts, killing at least two civilians and injuring at least 9.
- 283 people are still missing in Kyiv Oblast as a result of the Russian occupation in February-March 2022;
- Land mines remain a significant danger for both the Ukrainian agricultural sector and its citizens;
- Zelensky signed the law on compensation for damaged or destroyed housing;

Military:

- The Russian grouping in Crimea has a low supply of basic types of anti-aircraft weapons. The supply is complicated both by the limited capabilities of the Russian defense industry and the limited transport capacity of the Kerch Strait bridge;
- The Russian forces continued to maintain a high combat intensity in the Maryinka area, where it used T-62 tanks.
- **Possible operation situation developments:**
- In the short term, the enemy will concentrate its efforts in the areas between Bakhmut and Bilohorivka and in the Kreminna-Lyman direction;
- Control of the Sea of Azov coast will acquire strategic importance in the near future.
- **Sea:** 19 ships and vessels of the Russian Federation patrol the Black Sea area where the American MQ-9 Reaper drone fell into the sea.

International:

- The ICC issued arrest warrants for Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova for the war crime of unlawful deportation of the population (children) and their unlawful transfer from occupied areas of Ukraine to Russia.
- The Slovak Republic joined Poland in sending jets (thirteen MIG-29). Sweden will donate eight self-propelled howitzers "Archer," and Estonia will also deliver a new aid package.
- Chinese companies have sent Russia weapons (1,000 assault rifles) and dual-use goods (drone parts and body armor), while the officials deny allegations and blame the U.S. for "keeping adding fuel to the fire on the Ukraine crisis."
- Xi Jinping will visit Vladimir Putin in Moscow. The expectations are low that the meeting may produce something tangible on stopping the war.

Humanitarian aspect:

March 17 marks the date when Ukrainian government created the National Information Bureau under the Ministry of Reintegration. Over the year, it participated in 39 prisoner exchanges, as a result of which 1,993 Ukrainians were released; registers of prisoners, political prisoners, and deported children were created.

President Zelensky signed the law on compensation for damaged or destroyed housing. The document defines the legal and organizational principles for providing state compensation for

damage and destruction of certain categories of real estate objects as a result of hostilities, starting from February 24. The law will not apply to objects that were in the temporarily occupied territory on the date of the introduction of martial law. It will also cover only the citizens of Ukraine.

As of today, 1,374 bodies of the people found in **Kyiv Oblast**, most of whom were killed by the Russian army, have been examined. Over 1,000 of them have been identified since the start of the full-scale invasion. Currently, there are about 200 unidentified bodies, and 283 people are still missing, said Iryna Pryanishnikova, the spokeswoman of the Kyiv Oblast police. She noted that police still find mass graves in Kyiv Oblast left by the Russian occupation.

The shooting by the Russian military of the Ukrainian prisoner Oleksandr Matsievskyi after the phrase "Glory to Ukraine" is, unfortunately, not an isolated incident, said Dmytro Lubinets, the human rights commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. He noted that the Russians shoot POWs openly and cynically, with the consent of their commanders and with the confidence that they will avoid punishment.

Russian attacks

The army of the Russian Federation carried out attacks on eight Ukrainian Oblasts over the past day. Two people were killed, eight were injured in Donetsk Oblast, and 1 person was injured in Kherson Oblast.

On the evening of March 17, Russia launched a massive drone attack on Ukraine. Air defense was working in Kyiv, Zhytomyr and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts.

Energy

As part of the "green transition", Ukraine is considering the possibility of building 20 small modular reactors instead of thermal power units destroyed by the war, Energy Minister Herman Galushchenko said.

Education

Some of the Ukrainian parents and children (15 to 20%) could not adapt to schooling during the full-scale war, according to data from a national survey by the Cedos Center. In cities with more than half a million residents, most children (87%) study remotely. Mixed or full-time education prevails in villages (62%). Independent work is common among schoolchildren. 43% of children receive homework from the teacher, 38% of students study materials online, 11% watch lessons on platforms and 7% study with a tutor.

Landmines

Mined lands are a real challenge for the agricultural sector, and the time plays against us, Deputy Minister of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine for Digital Development, Digital Transformations and Digitalization Denys Bashlyk said. Ukraine urgently needs international support for the quality inspection and demining of potentially contaminated areas, Bashlyk stressed.

Three civilians were blown up by landmines in one day. The incidents happened in Kherson, Chernihiv, and Kharkiv Oblasts, heads of respective Oblast Military State Administrations said. All three of them were hospitalized with severe injuries.

Yesterday, March 16, the pyrotechnic units of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine diffused 483 explosive objects.

Occupied territories

According to the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, a newly created torture chamber was spotted in the southeastern part of Enerhodar, Zaporizhzhia Oblast. People with pro-Ukrainian views and those who do not meet the demands of the [Russian] occupiers are subjected to brutal torture there.

Operational situation

General conclusion:

- The main efforts of the Russian military are concentrated on offensive actions in the Kupyansk, Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka and Shakhtarsk directions.
- The Russian grouping in Crimea has a low supply of basic types of anti-aircraft weapons. The supply is complicated both by the limited capabilities of the Russian defense industry and the limited capacity of the Kerch Strait bridge;
- The Russian forces continue to maintain a high combat intensity in the Maryinka area, where it used T-62 tanks.

Battleline:

- Units of the Ukrainian Defense Forces repelled 70 Russian attacks in different directions;
- The Russian forces carried out unsuccessful offensive actions near Hryanykivka, Kreminna, Kuzmyne, Verkhnyokamianske, Spirne in Luhansk Oblast; Orikhovo-Vasylivka, Bakhmut, Ivanivske, Hryhorivka, Kamianka, Avdiivka, Pervomaiske, Nevelske and Maryinka in Donetsk Oblast.

Change in enemy disposition:

- "Crimea Defense Grouping", consisting of three tactical groups: "North" (1st separate marines brigade, four motorized rifle battalions, two tank companies), "Center" (up to ten motorized rifle battalions), and "South" (up to six parachute airborne battalions, marine corps battalion) is formed. The formation of two territorial troops regiments, two motorized rifle battalions and a reserve "volunteer" battalion (the collaborating authorities of Crimea are forming the latter) is ongoing. The Russian Crimean grouping generally has about 12,000 servicemen, 28 tanks, 166 armored combat vehicles, up to 60 guns and 12 MRLS.
- In the area of the Medvedivka village there are reserves of "Dnepr" and "Vostok" troops groupings with a total number of up to 730 units of weapons and military equipment including up to 30 tanks, 100 armored combat vehicles, 25 multi-purpose light-armored towing vehicle, 8 2A36 "Giatsint-B", 6 2S1 "Gvozdika" and 12 2S3 "Akatsiya", 8 BM-21 type "Grad" MRLS.

Escalation indicators: not observed

Possible operation situation developments:

- In the short term, the enemy will concentrate its efforts in the areas between Bakhmut and Bilohorivka and in the Kreminna-Lyman direction;
- Control of the Sea of Azov coast will acquire strategic importance in the near future.

Azov-Black Sea Maritime Operational Area:

- The number of Russian ships at sea has changed over the past day. 19 ships and vessels of the Russian Federation patrol the Black Sea area where the American MQ-9 Reaper drone fell into the sea at a distance of about 70-80 nautical miles from the coast of Crimea. It is possible that the ships of the Russian Federation found individual fragments of the American drone's fuselage, but its main part is likely to be at a depth of about 1,500 meters. On March 17, the US Air Force again sent the RQ-4 Global Hawk drone to the Black Sea to conduct surveillance for several hours.
- Two surface and two underwater "Kalibr" missile launchers are among the Russian ships at sea, but the number of missiles they carry is probably much smaller than the standard (24 missiles).
- One patrol ship is on duty in the waters of the Sea of Azov.
- Russian aviation continues to fly from the Crimean airfields of Belbek, Saky, Dzhankoy and Hvardiyske over the northwestern part of the Black Sea. A total of 22 combat sorties were made over the past day. Seven aircraft were involved in monitoring the surface and air situation in the northwestern part of the Black Sea, namely 4 Su-27 aircraft, 2 Su-30 SM aircraft, and one MiG-29K aircraft (all from Saki airfield).
- Two military transport aircraft of the Russian Air Force delivered personnel to Belbek airfield and one to Saki airfield.
- Control of the air situation and operational-tactical aviation over the waters of the Sea of Azov was carried out by the A-50U AEW&C aircraft.

"The Grain initiative".

Ukraine can double the export of agricultural products if the Black Sea routes are unblocked, Prime Minister of Ukraine Denys Shmyhal said in the March 17 Cabinet meeting, " Together with our partners, we are making efforts to extend the "grain initiative". "Since the launch of the initiative, we have managed to export more than 24 million tons of food. Under the conditions of unblocking the Black Sea routes, we can export twice as much." The Ukrainian authorities insist that the Black Sea Grain Initiative should be open-ended and automatically extended for 120 days. "The aggressor's attempts to shorten the terms of the extension are a manipulation to continue blackmail and foment a global food crisis," the prime minister claims. He added that in addition to the "grain agreement", implementing the "Paths of Solidarity" initiative is ongoing to increase the export of Ukrainian agricultural products.

So far, the validity of the Black Sea Grain Initiative has been agreed upon until March 18, 2023.

Russian operational losses from 24.02.22 to 17.03.23

Personnel - almost 163,320 people (+760);
Tanks 3,506 (+2);
Armored combat vehicles – 6,823 (+13);
Artillery systems – 2,552 (+13);
Multiple rocket launchers (MLRS) - 504 (+1);
Anti-aircraft warfare systems - 265 (0);
Vehicles and fuel tanks – 5,401 (+7);
Aircraft - 305 (0);
Helicopters – 290 (+1);
UAV operational and tactical level – 2,145 (0);
Intercepted cruise missiles - 907 (0);
Boats/ships – 18 (0).

Ukraine, general news

The Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council, Oleksiy Danilov, warns that Russian President Vladimir Putin is planning a world famine in the coming years. His goal is to reduce Ukrainian food exports leading to the appearance of migrants fleeing hunger. For this reason, it is very important to stop the regime of the aggressor country as soon as possible.

Since the beginning of 2023, the ports of the Danube Sea Cluster have maintained a high rate of cargo handling; in particular, the largest seaport of the Izmail district in January-February increased its cargo turnover by 3.6 times compared to the same period last year — to more than 2.42 million tons.

International diplomatic aspect

The ICC issued arrest warrants for "Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova in the context of the situation in Ukraine," which is an unprecedented move. The Russian President sets a precedent of a seating head of state to be arrested. Putin is accused of being responsible for the war crime of unlawful deportation of the population (children) and their unlawful transfer from occupied areas of Ukraine to Russia. A Commissioner for Children's Rights in the Office of the President of Russia is accused of the same crime. There are reasonable grounds to believe that Putin is individually criminally liable for the aforementioned crimes. Though the Chamber kept the warrants secret "in order to protect victims and witnesses and also to safeguard the investigation," it was decided to "publicly disclose the existence of the warrants, the name of the suspects, the crimes for which the warrants are issued, and the modes of liability." The reason behind that is "that the public awareness of the warrants may contribute to the prevention of the further commission of crimes." The wanted persons is to be arrested in 124 countries-parties to the Rome Statute and 15 more, which haven't ratified the Statute of the ICC yet.

Russians have killed 494 and injured 979 children (OHCHR data as of March 13). According to Ukraine's ombudsman, 16,226 officially verified Ukrainian children are illegally held on Russian territory, but the number might be as high as 150,000. So far, 308 kids have been returned from Russia (Office of the Prosecutor General).

"We consider the very formulation of the question outrageous and unacceptable. Russia, like a number of states, does not recognize the jurisdiction of this court. And accordingly, any decisions of this kind are null and void for the Russian Federation from the point of view of the law," Putin's spokesperson said. Margarita Simonyan, the chief propagandist, threatened with a nuclear strike, "I would like to see a country that, by decision of The Hague, will arrest Putin. After some eight minutes, or how long is the flight time [of nuclear missiles] to its capital." The head of Russia's Investigative Committee, Olexsandr Bastrykin, commissioned an investigation "in connection with the illegal issuance of warrants for the arrest of citizens of the Russian Federation by the ICC." President Zelensky said this is "A historic decision, from which historical responsibility will begin."

Sweden will donate eight self-propelled howitzers "Archer." Estonia will deliver a new aid package that includes semi-automatic rifles, sniper rifles, scopes, binoculars, ammunition, individual equipment, patrol boats, thermal imaging scopes, and medical supplies. The Slovak Republic will deliver thirteen MIG-29 Jets and elements of a short-range air defense missile system Kub. Kyiv hopes that Poland and Slovakia sending jets to Ukraine will break a barrier of supplying Western-made jets. A bipartisan group of U.S. senators voiced their support for sending F-16 and requested that the Secretary of Defense provide them with information about capabilities Ukraine might gain if such a decision is taken, the time needed to train the pilots, and possible sources for the jets.

Chinese companies, including one connected to the government in Beijing, have sent Russian entities 1,000 assault rifles (M16 analogs) and other dual-use goods, including drone parts (12 shipments) and body armor (over 12 tons), according to POLITICO. PRC Foreign Ministry's spokesperson, replying to a question about weapons and dual-use goods supplies to Russia, said, "China always handles the export of military items in a prudent and responsible manner and regulates the export of dual-use articles in accordance with relevant laws and regulations. At the same time, we are consistently opposed to unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction with neither basis in international law nor UN Security Council mandate. China's consistent position and practice stands in sharp contrast with the acts of certain countries that apply double standards on arms sales and keep adding fuel to the fire on the Ukraine crisis."

Xi Jinping will pay a state visit to Russia to "boost strategic coordination and practical cooperation between the two countries" and "further deepen mutual trust and mutual understanding between China and Russia and cement the political foundation and public support for the long-standing friendship between the two peoples." The Foreign Ministry's spokesperson described the "strategic partnership of coordination for a new era" between the two autocratic regimes as such that "featuring strategic trust, good neighborliness, and cooperation, setting a new model for international relations." Wang Wenbin characterized the trip as one for peace, "On the basis of no-alliance, no-confrontation, and no-targeting of any third party, China and Russia will continue to practice true multilateralism, promote greater democracy in international relations, work towards building a multi-polar world, improve global governance and contribute to development and progress in the world. China will uphold an objective and fair position on the

Ukraine crisis and play a constructive role in promoting talks for peace." Putin and Xi will sign a joint statement on deepening comprehensive partnership and strategic interaction entering a new era, and a joint statement on the development plan for key areas of Russian-Chinese economic cooperation until 2030.

Whatever phraseology Beijing employs, the actions speak volumes. Just twenty days before Putin's all-out war on Ukraine, the "no limits" partnership was announced between two countries. Xi Jinping hasn't called Volodymyr Zelensky ever since the invasion. Wang Yi, a key party figure on foreign affairs, delivered a vision a la Kremlin on the "Ukrainian crisis" to the Munich Security Conference and flew to Moscow, ignoring Kyiv. Beijing published its 12-point position on a political settlement of the "Ukrainian crisis," mainly about PRC relations with the U.S. rather than a plan to stop the war. Therefore, the expectations are low that China's meeting with Russia may produce something tangible to stop the war.

Russia, relevant news

Russian Defense Minister Serhiy Shoigu awarded the Su-27 pilots who shot down the American MQ-9 Reaper drone over the Black Sea with state awards.

Centre for Defence Strategies (CDS) is a Ukrainian security think tank. We operate since 2020 We publish this brief daily. If you would like to subscribe, please send us an email at cds.dailybrief@gmail.com

*The CDC Daily Brief is produced with the support of the **Kyiv School of Economics** <https://kse.ua>*

Please note, that we subscribe only verified persons and can decline or cancel the subscription at our own discretion

We are an independent, non-government, non-partisan, and non-profit organisation. More at www.defence.org.ua

Our Twitter (in English) - https://twitter.com/defence_centre Our Facebook (in Ukrainian) - <https://www.facebook.com/cds.UA>

Our brief is for information only and we verify our information to the best possible extent